

# *Musician Orchestrates Deep Healing and Integration with CST*

By Karen Axelrod, BA, CST-D, CACMT

Sarah\* sought out CranioSacral Therapy after suffering for a couple months from headaches, tiredness, and a violent chronic cough brought on by a lingering respiratory illness and two rounds of strong antibiotics. At 59 years old, she currently works as a physical therapist, after having retired from a career as a professional musician. Due to the health problems, she was forced to cut back on her practice and limit the number of clients she saw each week.

She had two serious car accidents in the 1970s and also a long history of pelvic floor dysfunction that includes three surgeries. In 2005 Sarah experienced a rectal prolapse, creating bodywide dysfunction, an experience she describes as feeling “like an explosion through my whole central nervous system and out my head.”

Sarah and I had four hour-long CranioSacral sessions over the course of six weeks. During the first session, I noted that the CranioSacral Rhythm in her lower body was practically non-existent and that she exhibited a serious left-to-right lateral strain throughout her thorax that tied into a similar strain pattern in her cranium. She reported in the session that the left and right sides of her body felt “disconnected” from each other. The right side felt strong and good, while the left side held all the “stuff of ages.” As I balanced the strain patterns with diaphragm releases and dural tube work, Sarah reported feeling more

integration and balance between the two sides.

By the end of the first session, we both felt an improvement in the energetic and physical balance between her left and right sides. I felt more energy moving downward toward her grounding center as the CSR in the lower part of her body returned.

After we got more energy moving from top to bottom in the first session, the second session focused on releasing the pressure she felt in her cranium. Sarah claimed that the bones in her head “hurt” as they shifted, creating pressure. The entire session focused on creating space at bregma, which felt like it was being sucked inward by an inferior strain in the entire vertical membrane system. This was also creating pressure on the jugular veins in Sarah’s neck and impeding venous drainage out of her cranium. No wonder she was experiencing head-aches! I worked on the jugular foramen and jugular veins themselves to improve flow.

Sarah reported a week later that she felt “incredibly better” after the last session. She felt old emotional stuff shifting and her headaches were diminishing. The chronic coughing was starting to subside, and she was increasing her client load in her Alexander practice.

As I arced in at the beginning of session No. 3, I was immediately drawn to Sarah’s right shoulder. It didn’t logically tie into her headaches or pelvic dysfunction, but I followed the clue her body gave me. As I moved in closer to work on the shoulder, I discovered it was

restricted from the first and second anterior ribs into the bicep. I did positional tissue release and diaphragm releases as the tissue unwound itself out of a tangle that involved ribs 1 and 2; thoracic vertebrae 1, 2, and 3; and eventually the full shoulder girdle. Toward the end of the session, Sarah’s entire upper body and neck began to release and soften. She reported that, finally, it felt like her whole body could “breathe” again as muscular contractions started to let go. Sarah enjoyed a deep connection to parts of her body that she hadn’t felt in years.

A couple weeks later I received an email from Sarah requesting another appointment and giving me this update:

*“Just a 'heads up' (Ha! If only I kept my head up I'd be better off). The day after our unraveling-the-right-shoulder session, I walked nose-first into the screen door. Bent it right in half -- the door, that is. My body seemed to want to remind me of other old injuries I thought I had put behind me. (I entertain myself: 'behind me.')* Years ago at a recording studio, I walked nose first into a glass wall that I thought was air and broke my nose and passed out. Then, in 1995, a therapist injured a nerve in my right scalene area and I couldn't play my flute for six years after that. Just a few additions to the broken second rib (broken front and back). Prime candidates to free up from.”

\* not her real name

I was able to see Sarah four days after receiving that email. Her nose was healing well from crashing into the screen, and despite that setback, her headaches continued to decrease. She reported a little soreness remaining in parts of her cranial bones, and the coughing was all gone.

As she reported on her overall condition, Sarah stated that she wanted more energy back. She also wanted to “let go,” “just be,” and “release the struggle in her tissues.” The struggle was about wanting people to change, but knowing she had no control over that. It was also a struggle about wanting to be heard by her mother and sister, yet knowing it didn’t really matter if she was heard or not. She knew intellectually that it is *she* who needs to change her responses to those certain people. But somatically she felt like she was holding on, like she kept coming up against blocks to letting go. As she said this, she pounded her fist into her open hand to illustrate the barriers facing her.

I arced into Sarah’s cranium as a starting point and cradled her occiput in my hands. I soon realized that she was out of her body. She was in her head trying to intellectually sort out her issues of struggle without engaging her body in the process.

I used guided imagery to lead Sarah back into her body, specifically into her bones. She settled into her bones nicely and really experienced what relaxing into her bones felt like, and it was good for her. We then started to expand that embodiment out into her muscles, which went fine until she hit the “interference.” This interference manifested as a blocked feeling from her nose down the front of her body to the

bottom of her sternum. As she explored the blockage more, it took on the look and feel of a muffler - -a thin, gray, metal muffler. It was symbolic of her feeling that she is not heard by her mother and sister – that her voice is muffled. She came to realize that it was an old pattern reflecting her feeling that she had not been heard as a child and wanting people to change to accommodate her.

The muffler also brought up a funny memory for Sarah. Her father, who had passed away some years prior, was a car buff when Sarah was growing up. She remembered when he replaced the muffler in her first car – an old Impala – with a very, very loud muffler. He got such a kick out of seeing his petite little teenage daughter rolling down the street in her big car with loudest muffler on the block.

As she took her awareness back to the energetic “muffler” now embedded in her chest, Sarah toiled with what to do about it and how to release the interference that was keeping her from finally “letting go.” She couldn’t see a way to release it. This was another part of her struggle.

I got a hit that perhaps her dad could help. I asked if she wanted to bring her dad into the session, given that he was an expert at removing mufflers. She immediately broke into tears of joy and said that he was the perfect person to help remove the muffler. “He would love it,” she said!

Sarah then went through the process of having her dad remove the muffler that had stifled her tissues energetically and stifled her voice for decades. As the muffler was removed from her chest, her entire body softened. The interference disappeared and

she was able to “just be” and let go throughout all the tissue in her body. Within moments, she said she felt total integration.

I remembered back to our first session, when I felt the severe strain throughout her thorax. It now made more sense to both of us, and we marveled how that healing piece had now come full circle. I felt confident that the “explosion” that disrupted her CNS in 2005 would also come to resolution as her body further integrated the work done that day.

Sarah’s father, the mechanic, provided the perfect image for her to work with. She commented on the masterful orchestration of the release that took place within. The struggle was over.

As Sarah reflected on the session the following day, she summed up her experience as follows:

*“That was an awesome session. I am still chuckling as I think of the progression from realizing there was a car part in my chest, that it was a muffler, and it’s quick release! You were a masterful guide. I love the bone meditation. I am still shifting. . . . I am so grateful for the process and progress and your wonderful help. I look forward to our next session.”*